

STATEMENT

MADE BEFORE THE LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE ON RAILROADS
IN RELATION TO A

Oak Street
UNCLASSIFIED

CONSOLIDATION

OF THE

Boston & Albany and Boston & Providence

RAILROAD CORPORATIONS,

AND THE REMOVAL OF THE BEACH STREET PASSENGER
STATION OF THE BOSTON & ALBANY RAILROAD.

BY THE

PRESIDENT OF THE BOSTON & ALBANY RAILROAD COMPANY.

MARCH 3, 1880.

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1880.



ADDRESS OF D. WALDO LINCOLN.

MR. CHAIRMAN, AND GENTLEMEN OF THE COMMITTEE, —
The importance of the question which you are to consider, to the city of Boston, to the stockholders of both of the corporations directly interested, including the Commonwealth, with its large interest in the Boston and Albany road, to the passengers and patrons of the roads, and especially of the Albany road, upon its whole line, not for this year or next year only, but possibly for the whole future of these roads, seems to require that a full and frank statement should be made of the successive steps by which the directors of the Boston and Albany road have reached their present position, and of the considerations which have influenced their policy and action. In order that there may be no mistake or misunderstanding on the subject, so far as their position or views are concerned, and so far as I am able or permitted to represent them, I have thought it proper to put my statement in writing.

George P. Carr
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The scheme for a joint passenger-station for the Boston and Albany and Boston and Providence roads is not a new one. Before the present station of the Providence road was erected, or any work had been done upon it, my predecessor had an interview with the then president of the Providence road, at which I was present, and proposed the erection of a joint passenger station by, and for the use of both roads upon the land of the Boston and Providence Company. We were informed that the plans for a separate and independent station for the Providence road had been prepared and approved, and that it was not expedient or practicable to change them. The Railroad Commissioners have, on more than one occasion, recommended in the most emphatic manner, the joint use of the

present station of the Providence road by both companies; and it is now in compliance with their recommendation, that measures have been taken by the directors of the Boston and Albany road to effect a union of the two companies, and thus secure the joint use of the station.

Failing in the attempt for an arrangement with the Providence road, of which I have spoken, and aware of the necessity for better passenger-accommodations for the road, the directors have availed themselves, from time to time, of every opportunity to obtain the necessary land for the purpose, in the vicinity of the present station. They have purchased since 1868, land and buildings north of the Albany-street bridge at a cost of \$500,000; but they have delayed building, for reasons which will sufficiently appear.

The present movement for a new station for the Boston and Albany road was commenced in the fall of 1878, by a petition from certain property-owners in the vicinity of the Beach-street station, to the Mayor and Aldermen of Boston, asking for the removal of the obstructions to Kneeland Street by the Boston and Albany Railroad. This petition resulted in the passage, by the aldermen, of stringent orders to prevent the illegal obstruction of the street. In January, 1879, the matter was brought before the Railroad Commissioners, by a petition from the same parties; and, after a hearing, the Commissioners decided that the complaints of the petitioners were well founded, and they recommended to the directors of the road that they should take the subject of new passenger-accommodations in Boston into immediate consideration, and cause some definite plan in relation thereto to be prepared. They not only said this, but they went much further; and I desire to read some extracts from their report upon the subject, which is presented in the tenth annual report of the Railroad Commissioners for the year 1879.

“The Boston and Providence corporation has recently built a model station in Boston at a site which cannot be improved upon. It is nearer the business parts of the city than the dwellings of a great majority of its wealthier residents. If completely utilized, it could be made to accommodate a vast amount of travel, — certainly three hundred trains a day. To reach its own Kneeland-street station, the Boston and Albany crosses the tracks of the Boston and Providence almost at the entrance of this model station. By simply turning its tracks to the left, it could enter it, and there find every accommodation it needs ready to its hand. . . . The grade crossings would be done away with, the Boston and Providence station fully utilized, Kneeland

Street relieved, the entire territory owned by the Boston and Albany south of that street could be used exclusively for local freight purposes by all three of the roads named, if thought desirable, and a perfectly easy access would be secured for all of them, as well as the Tunnel route, to the South Boston flats. If the corporations could but be induced to act together, this might be effected at almost no outlay at all, and with an enormous saving in expenditures now already contemplated. That they will so act, the Commissioners, in view of the transactions of the past, hardly entertain a hope. By themselves they are powerless to effect any thing; but on its merits the case is, nevertheless, so plain that they cannot refrain from stating it. . . . In taking the subject-matter of this hearing under advisement, therefore, the Board would urgently press upon the management of the Boston and Albany that they should consider it in connection with the whole railroad situation on the south and west sides of Boston, both as it at present stands and in its probable development. It is at any rate indisputable that, unless existing lines and existing facilities are to be utilized through concentration, they will, in the near future, be duplicated at an expenditure of millions. The experience of the past will be repeated.

"In making these suggestions the Commissioners have no idea that they could be brought about at once or without effort. That they could ultimately be brought about, if the Boston and Albany management desired, there can be little room for doubt. Whatever is done, and whether it be on a comprehensive plan or in continuation of the make-shift policy of the past, the passenger-station question is the first to be decided."

Acting upon these suggestions, and certainly influenced, so far as the directors of the Albany road were concerned, by them, committees were appointed by the directors of both companies to confer upon the subject, and several meetings between these committees and the representatives of the roads were held. No special result followed these attempts at negotiation. The directors of the Providence road preferred, and proposed to lease one-half of the premises of the corporation, north of Dartmouth Street, to the Boston and Albany road, upon terms to be arranged between them, or by reference; or, if that proposition was not acceptable, it was stated that a proposition to exchange share for share, and so consolidate the two properties, would be submitted to their stockholders. Neither of these propositions met the approval of the directors of the Albany road, at that time, and they were accordingly declined. The directors of the Boston and Albany road were of the opinion, that the joint use of the Providence station, good as it is, by two large and independent companies, managed by different officers and under somewhat different systems, would be undesirable and inexpedient.

While these negotiations were going on, the directors of the

Albany road were considering plans for the location of the new station upon the land of the company on the south side of Kneeland Street. By the plan of the company's land, which is herewith exhibited, you will see that it owns all the land included in the area bounded by Albany Street on the west, Kneeland Street on the north, Utica and South Streets on the east, and Broadway extension on the south. The Albany-street bridge is the key to this whole position. It cannot be materially changed. It presents an obstacle to the location of the proposed station on Albany Street, which cannot be overcome. A sharp curve of only four hundred and thirty feet radius would have to be encountered at the very entrance of the station, which, with the necessary switches, would be impracticable and dangerous for the heavy locomotives of the passenger-trains. There is not an engineer, or intelligent man acquainted with the practical working of the road, who does not utterly condemn this location for a passenger-station. It has therefore been decided, if we must remain in this locality, to place the new station on the block of land now occupied by the large brick freight-house, between Lincoln and Utica Streets, and to build two new freight-houses to supply its place. One of these new freight-houses has been already built, and is now in use, and the other will be finished early in the spring. The plans for the new passenger-station are made, and, so far as the building alone is concerned, are satisfactory. The new station will furnish, in my judgment, as I have before stated, when passengers are once in it, as ample, convenient, and comfortable accommodations as the best of the passenger-stations in Boston. The change of the location, which was asked for, as a matter of supposed necessity, has been approved by the Mayor and Aldermen, and by the Railroad Commissioners.

Thus far, while we have been erecting new buildings, we have destroyed nothing of value. Those which we have built and are now building will be necessary under any arrangement that may be made. Before committing the company irrevocably, by the destruction of large and valuable buildings, to the proposed scheme, to which there are so many serious objections, the directors have thought it wise and proper to make one more effort to effect an arrangement with the directors of the Boston and Providence road, and have now submitted to them a formal and distinct proposition to unite and consolidate

the two companies upon the basis of share for share of stock, subject, of course, to the approval of the stockholders, and to the action of the Legislature. This is the present position of the case, as I understand it. I now desire to state to the committee some of the considerations which have induced the directors of the Albany road to take this action.

The permanent establishment of the passenger-station of the Boston and Albany road, at or near its present location, perpetuates for all time the grade crossing at Dartmouth Street. Seventy-eight passenger-trains upon the Albany road, and seventy-two, I think, upon the Providence road, making one hundred and fifty trains in all, daily stop and cross each other at this point. The average delay of a passenger-train by stopping, including the time lost in slowing and getting under full headway again, is from two and a quarter to two and a half minutes. This makes an aggregate detention of all the trains, with their thousands of passengers, of from five and a half to six hours a day. In addition to this, it takes the Albany trains at least two minutes longer to run from the crossing to the Beach-street station, than it would to the Providence station: so that all the passengers on the Providence road would gain from two and a quarter to two and a half minutes, and those on the Albany road from four to five minutes in the cars, on every trip in and out of Boston. The time-tables of both roads could be shortened just so much. This saving of time would go far to compensate for any additional distance to and from the station in the city. The expense to both companies of this large number of unnecessary stops, although of less consequence, is deserving of some consideration. The danger from this grade crossing cannot be avoided. Every possible known appliance is or should be used to insure safety. But, after all is done that can be done in this way, every thing will depend upon human intelligence, vigilance, and fidelity. Accidents have happened in the past at this crossing by trains coming in collision, resulting in one case, within my own recollection, in the death of a faithful engineer; and there have been narrow escapes, of which no public mention has been made. In the case I have referred to, if the engine had struck the passenger-train midway, no one would care to contemplate what the consequences might have been. Let the signal-man neglect his duty, or the engineer mistake or neglect

the signal, or miscalculate the distance or the power of the brakes, and two trains may be thrown together at any moment. The directors of the Boston and Albany Railroad Company are not willing, and do not propose, to take the moral responsibility of perpetuating this inconvenient and dangerous crossing; and it is chiefly for the purpose of relieving themselves and their company from it that they have made concessions which under other circumstances they would not have felt justified in making.

Another serious objection to the proposed scheme for a new station on Kneeland Street is the absolute waste of the money which is to be expended upon it. The cost of the station which it is proposed to erect, cannot be less than \$300,000. The value of the buildings which it will be necessary to destroy is, at the least, \$100,000 more. Add to this the value of the land which will be required for the stations and the tracks devoted to the business, and you have the cost of these passenger-accommodations. Now, it seems to the directors of the Boston and Albany road as well for their company, and better for all other parties, to pay this sum to the stockholders of the Boston and Providence road as a bonus for their property, rather than to waste it upon unnecessary buildings.

The location of the proposed new station is extremely objectionable, and will never be satisfactory to a large majority of our passengers, and especially to that large class who are least able to provide for themselves, and whose comfort and convenience it is our first duty to consider. The station cannot be placed on Albany Street, for the reason which I have stated. Its location on South Street, which is advocated in some quarters, would involve the purchase of additional land, at a cost, now, of half a million of dollars, and which, until now, could not have been purchased for twice that sum. If placed there, it would be still farther removed from the centres of business and population. The only advantage of this location would be its proximity to the station of the Old Colony Railroad. Great changes are to take place in the streets in this portion of the city. Albany Street, from being a comparatively dead and deserted street, is to become a noisy and crowded thoroughfare. The travel on Kneeland Street has already largely increased, since it has been partially relieved of obstructions by the railroad; and it will be doubled when the Beach-street station is removed.

The approaches to the present station are through clean, quiet, and convenient streets, and are in no way objectionable. The additional distance of five hundred feet to the proposed Kneeland-street station, will take us to an entirely different neighborhood, and into less agreeable surroundings. Forty years of the traffic of the Albany and Old Colony Railroads have made this locality what it is, and no better than it is. All the heavy freight business of these two great roads pours through and across the streets. It is no disparagement to the property or the property-holders on Kneeland, Utica, and Lincoln Streets to say, that this is not a suitable place for a passenger-station for the Boston and Albany Railroad. I hope, Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, you will view these premises, and judge for yourselves if the directors of the road are making a mistake in this matter. I hope, also, that our friends upon the line of our road, from whom we regret to differ, and whose comfort and convenience it is our desire and duty to consider, will not only examine this location for themselves, but take the opinion and advice of their wives and daughters upon the subject; and I shall be surprised if they do not agree with us, that they are entitled to better accommodations than any they can enjoy there.

The proposed passenger-station and connecting tracks will occupy from two to three acres of land that cannot well be spared for the purpose. It will all be wanted for the freight business of the road. It is, in my judgment, the more important of the two, to the great commercial interests of Boston, to have good and convenient facilities for freight business than for passengers. The latter can easily and cheaply move themselves, whereas all merchandise has to be moved at considerable cost, and the longer the distance the greater the cost. The modern way of business is for sales and purchases in small quantities, at short intervals of time, and prompt delivery is of the utmost consequence. That is a circumstance wherein Boston has, and should maintain, its advantage over New York. I consider the admirable location of the local freight-houses of the Boston and Albany road, in such close proximity to the business centre of the city, as of far more importance to its business interests than the passenger-station, wherever it may be located. If, by the curtailment of these freight facilities, to accommodate the passenger business, any considerable portion of the freight business of the road should be forced to South

Boston, or to the Back Bay, the additional cost of teaming to and from these distant points, will be a direct tax upon every merchant doing business with the road, and so far a positive injury to the commercial interests of the city. The removal of the passenger business of the Albany road to the Providence station, will not only secure all these freight facilities to the Albany road, but will be followed by the transfer of the freight of the Providence road to the Albany yard, to the great advantage of all doing business over that line. The city will be benefited, in so far as the heavy teaming to and from the Providence station, which is now done through Boylston, Essex, and Chauncy Streets, crossing Tremont and Washington Streets, will find the Boston and Albany yard by shorter routes, through less crowded streets.

The union of the Albany and Providence roads will secure to the latter — perhaps I should say to both companies — the use of the Union Freight Railroad. The Providence road now owns an undivided half of this freight road, but has no way or means of connecting its tracks with or using it, excepting over the Albany road; and it is manifest that the city of Boston will never permit the extension of this road to the Providence station, by a track through Kneeland and Eliot Streets, crossing Harrison Avenue, Washington and Tremont Streets at grade.

It will also enable the Providence railroad and the city of Providence to make a close freight connection, without an intervening link, by means of the Grand Junction Railroad, with the Eastern, Maine, Fitchburg, and Lowell Railroads.

The effect of the proposed union of the two companies, and the consequent removal of the passenger-station of the Albany road, upon the real estate in its vicinity, remains to be considered. The evils anticipated from such changes are often entirely imaginary, and almost always greatly exaggerated. Nevertheless, in the present case, the belief is sincerely entertained, that the continuance of the Albany passenger-station substantially in its present locality is essential to the value of property in the neighborhood. I do not share in this opinion. Railroad passenger-stations, in large cities, are not desirable neighbors. It is not in their vicinity that property reaches or maintains a high value, unless the railroad-company is itself, or is supposed to be, a customer for it. How much has the com-

Boston & Albany railroad company.

Statement made before the legislative committee on railroads in relation to a consolidation of the Boston & Albany and Boston & Providence railroad corporations, and the removal of the Beach Street passenger station of the Boston & Albany railroad. Boston, Franklin Press, 1880.

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bined influence of the four great railroads upon the north side of the city, with their stations quite near together, done to hold the centre of trade in their vicinity? I can find no great evidence of growth and improvement in the immediate vicinity of the Old Colony road, which has an excellent station, and a very large passenger business.

The Old Boston and Worcester, now the Boston and Albany road, has had the special benefit of the United States Hotel directly in front of its station for thirty years or more; but what have the hotel and station together been able to do, toward giving business and character and value to Lincoln and Albany Streets? Business is tending toward the terminus of the Boston and Albany road, population toward that of the Boston and Providence road, not in consequence of, but in spite of, the railroads. The termini of these two roads, fortunately for them, are directly or nearly in the path of the city's growth and development; for the city of Boston, like all other prosperous cities and towns, must grow and expand where there is room for expansion. I have heard it stated that the removal of this station will depreciate property and reduce rents in the city as far north as High Street, and west upon the line of the railroad, as far as the city of Newton. The Boston and Albany Railroad Company has had some experience in matters of this kind. The great changes in the passenger-stations in the city of Worcester were effected by the same influences which operate here, and under very similar circumstances. Important streets were obstructed by the railroads there, until, under the pressure of public opinion, the Legislature passed an act requiring the railroad-companies to remove a passenger-station which had been maintained forty years, to a location a third of a mile distant. Remonstrances were poured in, as they are, or will be here, against the change. Predictions were made, and have been preserved in print, that every foot of land on the principal street in the city, and all the land west of it, would deteriorate in value in consequence of the removal of the station. The change, however, was made, and I think it would be difficult to find any evidence of decay or depreciation of the value of property in consequence of it. With the single exception of the United States Hotel property, I doubt if any real estate in the neighborhood of the Beach-street station will be injuriously affected, to any appreciable extent, by its removal;

and the hotel property will be about as much injured, for a hotel, by the removal of the station below Kneeland Street. The concentration of all the freight business of the two companies will keep this a most busy section of the city. Albany Street is sure to become a business street. The storehouses on Utica Street will be more valuable if the freight-house remains than if it is converted into a passenger-station. Any use to which the present Beach-street station can be put, and which will no longer require the lower part of Lincoln Street to be little else than a great hack-stand, cannot but be beneficial to the adjoining property, for business purposes. There may be a few less small fruit-stores on Kingston Street, and a few less stores of a different kind on Kneeland Street; but these will soon give place to other business, when they are no longer patronized.

I have had the distances carefully measured on the most accurate maps of the city, to get the comparative distances from the Providence station and from the proposed Kneeland-street station, to certain common and central points in the city. For all of Washington Street there is no substantial difference between the two stations. East of Washington Street, the advantage of the situation, so far as distance is concerned, is in favor of the Kneeland-street location; and west of it, is in favor of the Providence station. I am obliged to admit, that for that portion of the city which may be called the burnt district, where the "merchants most do congregate," the advantage is decidedly in favor of the Kneeland-street location.

I can only meet the argument, or assertion, or apprehension, in whichever form the idea may be expressed, that, if a union of the Boston and Albany and Boston and Providence roads should be effected, the Boston and Providence road would no longer be "managed for the convenience of the passenger and business traffic of the two cities which it connects, and the intervening territory," by asking for what other earthly purpose it can be managed. The directors of the Boston and Albany Railroad Company do not propose to purchase this property, and cannot afford to pay the high price which they have offered for it, for the purpose of destroying it. There was some such absurd notion, here and there, when the Western and Boston and Worcester Railroads were consolidated, that the forty miles of road between Boston and Worcester would be only "a

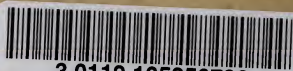
straw to put into Boston's molasses-jug." I have no doubt that our friends in Brookline and Newton and Wellesley, although they may not agree with me upon the matter we are now considering, will yet say that their trains were not curtailed, their cars neglected, their stations suffered to go to decay, or their privileges or business facilities in any way abridged, in consequence of that consolidation.

The directors of the Boston and Albany Railroad company have been prompted to their present action by the highest authority on such matters, the late able chairman of the Board of Railroad Commissioners. They have been influenced by a sincere desire to meet public expectation, and to do the best thing for all interests. They have no desire to aggrandize their company, nor to add to their own duties and responsibilities. These are quite enough as they are. They have endeavored to look beyond the wants and necessities of the present time, and to meet the question which is presented to them, "not in continuation of the make-shift policy of the past, but on a comprehensive plan," as recommended by the Commissioners. A few months ago the offer that has been made, would have been thought an extravagant one. It is generous to-day. If the arrangement shall be sanctioned by the Legislature, and accepted by the stockholders of the two roads, they will have the satisfaction of having aided to secure for these two great companies, and for all who are connected with and do business over them, the very best terminal facilities for both passengers and freight, that any railroad-company has, or ever can have, in the city of Boston. If the project shall fail, they will have done what they honorably could do to accomplish that end.

NOTE. — At the adjourned hearing on Thursday, March 4, in reply to the charges which had been made by the counsel for the remonstrants, that the Boston and Albany management had been guilty of "indirectness and of subterfuges and disguises" in procuring the petition, President Lincoln said that he should regret that the members of the committee should think that the Directors of the Boston and Albany Railroad Company, or its President, had been guilty of attempting to gain an advantage by "indirectness," or that they had been playing a trick upon this committee or a Massachusetts Legislature. He asserted that he had no knowledge whatsoever about the petition, until he saw it in the morning papers, and was surprised to see it. He had no conversation with Mr. Aspinwall or either of the gentlemen who signed the petition upon the subject, and knew nothing of their intention to present it. He also said that the directors did expect and

intend to present a petition upon the subject in behalf of the company. Knowing that the time for the introduction of new business was soon to expire, he had called a meeting of his Board of Directors, hoping and expecting that an agreement or understanding would be reached with the President of the Providence road upon the subject; but, having failed to agree upon the terms of union of the two roads, the meeting was abandoned and the subject dropped by his company, except as he appeared here now in aid of the petition and to explain the position and views of the directors.





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